

Thought for the Day 13th July - John Reed

Read Matthew 1:18-25

“What’s in a name?” So asks Juliet, in Shakespeare’s classic play. She is complaining that simply because she is a Capulet and Romeo is a Montague, they are banned from marrying. If they had different names – from different families – things would be different.

But, of course, their names – and their families – do matter. And so the story unfolds.

Names are important to us in many ways. They tell us what family, tribe, clan we belong to. They carry our reputation.

Names can also have meanings. John, I’m told, means “Gift of God.” I’ll leave that up to others to decide on (no emails, please!).

Names in the Bible often have significant meaning.

When God gives his name to Moses in Exodus 3, it is “I Am Who I Am.” It says something deep about God’s existence and nature.

When God promises Abraham in Genesis 17 that he will be the father of a nation too multitudinous to count, he changes his name from Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of a multitude).

When Jesus meets Simon, he tells him that he shall be called Cephas, or Peter, which means “rock,” (John 1:42) and he tells him (Matthew 16:18) that on this “rock” he will build the church.

In this passage, Jesus is given two names. “Jesus” (v. 21), which means “God saves”, because he will save his people from their sins. And “Immanuel” (v. 23), which means “God with us” – because that’s who Jesus is.

What other names do you know of for Jesus, and what do they tell us about him?